critical digest

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This Week in NYC

A triple-threat legit building project was announced by Harry Brandt, motion picture theatre owner. A $ 5 million 2000 seat playhouse will be constructed on the East Side between 48th and 52nd St in 1963. NYC's first new large theatre in over 30 years will feature a lower price scale than Broadway houses, a parking garage on the premises, and an arcade of stores in the theatre building. The last NY theatre constructed was the Barrymore in 1928. The Repertory Theatre of the Lincoln Center project is slated to debut in 1964.

Plays

Shows that closed include -- The Garden of Sweets after 1 and Look: We've Come Through after 5 performances... A Shot in the Dark first act has been cut and some new jokes added... Sunday in NY added a week to tryout run and will open Nov 29... The Egg, Robert Schlitt's adaptation of the controversial Marceau comedy, opens pre-Broadway try Nov 27 at CivicTheatre, Chicago, staged by Lamont Johnson with Dick Shawn.

A Gift of Time, new name of "The Last of the Wine", Garson Kanin's adaptation of the Wertenbaker novel to star Olivia de Havilland in Feb... The Indoor Sport by Jack Perry to star Ginger Rogers in Mar.

Players

Herbert Ross, the choreographer, has replaced Gerald Freedman as overall director of The Gay Life during Toronto tryout ... June Harding to be featured in Take Her, She's Mine... Jack Bittner, Rex Thompson added to First Love ... Newcomer Gretchen Walther picked as sole female in Something About A Soldier with Ralph Meeker, Kevin McCarthy, Sal Mineo... Eileen Heckart to co-star inA Family Affair musical... Guthrie McClintic, 68, John C. Wilson, 62, and Joan McCracken, 38, died in NY.

NYC Calendar

All in Love- Martinque (32nd St & Broadway)- 11/6. Stella Holt- Terry Brown, Jr-Jacques Urbont present musical by Bruce Geller and Urbont based on "The Rivals", directed by Tom Brennan with David Atkinson.

Sharon's Grave-Maidman (416 W 42nd St)-11/8 Irish Players present play by John B. Keane. Directed by Sonia Moore with Dermot McNamara, Helena Carroll, John Call.

Gideon-Plymouth- 11/9. Fred Coe & Arthur Cantor present play by Paddy Chayevsky. Directed by Tyrone Guthrie with Frederic March, Douglas Campbell, Mark Lenard.

Broadway Business

Variety reports business generally down, major exception Come Blow Your Horn which hit its highest gross. New sellouts include- A Shot in the Dark and An Evening with Yves Montand.

Special Events

ANT A Matinee series opens Nov 14 matinee at Theatre De Lys with "Brecht on Brecht: His Life and His Art" program of readings staged by Gene Frankel with Viveca Lindfors, Eli Wallach, Anne Jackson. The Jewish Wife with Lindfors will also be presented. Program will be repeated Nov 26 at ANTA Theatre as ANTA benefit.

New Dramatists Committee first lecture of season to consider "Art of the Chinese Theatre" Nov 7 at Booth Theatre 6 PM with A.C. Scott, and Hong-Kong actor-directors Hu Hung-Yen and Hu Yung-Fang, currently staging The Butterfly Dream, 14th century Chinese play, at Institute for Advanced Studies in the Theatre Arts.NYC.

TV Theatre Notes

HMS Pinafore production of Stratford, Ont, Festival staged by Tyrone Guthrie to be presented on WNBC-TV (NY) Nov 24 and on NBC-TV network Dec 25.

Off Broadway

Shows that closed include-- Go Show Me A Dragon after 3 and The Buskers after 6 performances ... Do You Know the Milky Way? with Broadway two member cast intact may be presented at Gramercy Arts in Nov by Ivor Balding if Equity waives its six months rule. ... Rehearsal pay Off Broadway to be raised to $45 per week for four weeks, and minimum salaries to be raised to $50 in 1963 under new contract between League of Off Broadway Theatres and Equity.

Van Dam Theatre, 15 Van Dam St, to debut Dec 6 with Sing Muse! musical by Joe Raposa and Eric Segal to be presented by Robert Feldstein, directed by Bill Penn. Charles Kasher is owner of new theatre, the former Huron Democratic Club, and has spent $60,000 to refurbish it.

Gods of the Lighting by Maxwell Anderson and G H Hickerson to be revived Nov 4-11 by Equity Library Theatre, directed by David Marlin-Jones... Red Eye of Love in final week at Provincetown, it plans to re-open at a midtown Off Broadway house in repertory with Fortuna musical ... Tom O'Malley, co-author of Bella musical has replaced Will Jordan... Richard Hoh to replace William Graham, Little Mary Sunshine original cast member, and Marian Mercer, title player, to leave Nov 19 to join New Faces... The Sap of Life offering $1 high school student tickets.

Theatre Book Notes

Judith Anderson's autobiography to be published by Knopf... Red Eye of Love published by Grove Press ... "Digests of Great American Plays" edited by John Lovell, Jr, Howard Univ, Washington, D.C. published by Crown Press.

Theatre Film Notes

Circle in the Square and Columbia Pictures have established a "working agreement" to train and develop new talent for motion pictures.

DIGESTS OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

The Complaisant Lover-Barrymore-11/1. 5 pro -and 2 con - Times, Journal American- filed on Graham Greene's comedy presented by Irene Mayer Selznick-H. M. Tennent, Ltd, directed by Glen Byam Shaw with Michael Redgrave, Googie Withers, Richard Johnson. Four of five pros were raves for play, players, production, while cons okayed players but thought script too thin. Two critics , one pro (Post) and one con (Journal American) felt Redgrave miscast. Affirmative rave parade headed by Kerr, Herald Tribune, who cheered play that discreetly and deliciously states a brand new truth for the theatre--dulteryis a great deal funnier if you will only take it seriously. Chapman, News, loved work of captivating sophistication, impeccably acted. Gilbert, Mirror, enjoyed simple frolic that is still splendidly funny, the latest and brightest word on how to build a menage-a-trois. Nadel, World Telegram & Sun, liked the penetrating comedy, though he was saddened where he was supposed to be amused. Watts, Post, okayed lesser phase work by Greene, still artfully written, polished, urbane and moderately entertaining. Compared to Ralph Richardson , whom Watts saw in London, Redgrave portrays too dashing, self confident a figure. Negative voter Taubman, Times, thought comedy Very English, tepid and thin, though urbane and amusing in a civilize way. McClain, Journal American, vetoed slick and largely inconsequential work that only has middling merit thanks to an excellent cast. He agreed that Redgrave was too attractive for role.

Write Me A Murder- Belasco 10/26. 5 pro- and 2 con- Mirror, Post- filed on new mystery play by Frederick Knott, presented and directed by George Schaefer with Kim Hunter, James Donald, Denholm Elliott, Torin Thatcher. Pro majority recommended it for mystery play fans, sharing plaudits among author, director, cast and set designer Warren Clymer. Two of them admitted being mystery fan addicts, Herald Tribune and Journal American. Con side felt script was too slow moving and obvious. Pro voter Taubman, Times, enjoyed the fresh fillip, interesting characters, suspenseful conclusion , thoroughbred cast and astute direction. Kerr, Herald Tribune , recommended it as splendid fun for mystery fans, sole fault was too much first act. Chapman, News, advised it was a pleasant evening for the blood-thirsty. McClain, Journal American, okayed good sneaky mystery with immaculate cast, inventive direction. Nadel, World Telegram & Sun, approved of crackling good mystery, better in character revelation than author's 1952 "Dial M For Murder." Dissenter Coleman, Mirror, excused cast which made most of opportunity, but panned sluggish, obvious, tepid plot. Watts, Post, predicted that it was so languorous and ineffectual that it could bring stage crime into disrepute. An excellent cast was wasted, he added.

The Garden of Sweets-ANTA Theatre- 10/31-10/31. 7 con-unanimous- filed on new play by Waldemar Hansen, produced by Ben Frye & Irving Squires, directed by Milton Katselas with Katina Paxinou, Madeleine Sherwood, Morgan Sterne, Lou Antonio. Candy store set by Boris Aronson won best notices. Several thought Paxinou was over-emotional, and some thought Sherwood better than Greek star. Two critics- Times and Journal American- blamed lack of characterization, while two --Herald Tribune, Mirror- blame lack of plot. Show closed after first and only performance.

NYC Future Calendar

The Automobile Graveyard-41st St- 11/13...Back to Back-11/14...Bella- East 11th St- 11/16...The Gay Life-Shubert-11/18...'Toinette-T. Marquee-11/20...Red Roses for Me- G. Mews-11/20...The Policeman & Androcles & Lion-East 74- 11/21...Man for All Seasons- ANTA-11/22...Sunday in NY- Cort-11/29...The Apple- Living-11/29...Daughter of Silence-11/30

OFF BROADWAY WEEK

O Marry Me!-Gate (162-2nd Av)-10/27. 3 pro- Times, Mirror, World Telegram & Sun-and 3 con- Herald Tribune , Post, Journal American- filed on musical based on Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" with book and lyrics by Lola Pergament, music by Robert Kessler, presented by Lily Turner, directed by Michael Howard with Elly Stone, Ted van Griethuysen, Leonard Drum, Chevi Colton, Joe Silver. Pro reviewers liked it for diverse reasons, while con reviewers were equally diverse. Pro voter Gelb, Times, okayed it for talented Stone, Drum, van Griethuysen, who made show pleasant and gay when onstage. McEvoy, Mirror, liked jaunty music, witty and singable lyrics, and entire cast except miscast Colton as "Kate Hardcastle." Nadel, WTS, found it quite charming, the satire never out of key, and all in good voice except Colton. Con reviewer Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, doubted if a few pretty tunes and costumes can make up for absence of sustained invention in the lyrics and the indeterminate style of many of the cast. Herridge, Post, also noted variety of styles, and blamed cast and direction rather than often entertaining material. O'Connor, Journal American, is puzzled if cast is playing it straight (if so it was inept and old fashioned) or if play was designed as burlesque (then it was just a very bad musical.)

Clandestine on the Morning Line-Actors Playhouse (100-7th Av S)- 10/30. 2 pro- Post, World Telegram & Sun- and 3 con- Times, Herald Tribune, Journal American-filed on Josh Greenfeld's play, presented John T. Weems-Robert Buccolo, directed by Allen Davis with all Negro cast including Rosetta LeNoire, Ed Cambridge, James Earl Jones. Play was previously presented as Ford Foundation grant play with white cast at Arena Stage, Washington. D. C. Pro viewer Watts, Post, found everything attractive except its inadequate story, there is something endearing about its warm-hearted humo and the acting of its excellent cast. Saffron, WTS, filed rave for play, players and direction. Negative viewers were all mild, all approving cast. Gelb, Times, blamed languid direction and plot. Morgenstern, Herald Tribune, could find nothing happening. McClain, Journal American, enjoyed first part, but was sorry that it dwindled to an obvious and inconsequential conclusion.

Go Show Me A Dragon-Midway(420W 42)-10/27-10/28 6 con-(no News review filed)- on play about West Coast beatniks by Gene Feldman, presented by Hanneford Productions, directed by John Ben Tarver with Philip Lawrence, Sharlene Stevens, Michael Del Medico. Aisle-sitters were unanimous in believing that script was as dull and mixed up as the beatniks themselves. Coleman, Mirror, had a few kind words for Lawrence, and Watts, Post, for Stevens, otherwise critics could find nothing nice to say. Closed after third performance.

The Buskers- Cricket-(162-2nd Av)-10/30-11/4. 2 pro -Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- and 4 con- Times, Herald Tribune, News, Post- filed on British play by Kenneth Jupp, winner of Arts Council grant. Presented by Lois Bianchi- & Amnon Kabatchnik, directed by Kabatchnik with Bruce Kimes, Allen Joseph, Grayson Hall, Lois Markle, Peggy Lane. Duet of pros were raves for exciting theatre, effective staging and fine cast. Lapole, Journal American, and Alpert, WTS, filed the raves. Con voters generally complimented direction and cast, but blamed complex plot and unbelievable characters. Funke, Times, recommended it for those who like their theatre heavily overlaid with symbols;he felt it got to its point over too long stretches of mystification and tedium. Crist, Herald Tribune, panned proceedings without mentioning cast or director. Herridge, Post, doubted that puzzle was hardly worth while. Closed after sixth performance.

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

LATE "LOOK"... Look: We've Come Through was the first important new American play of the season, nominates Watts, Post. Critic added that play closed at virtually the moment word got around that he had praised it... Times display ad day before closing signed by producer, director, author read " We, Saint Subber, Hugh Wheeler and Jose Quintero are withdrawing Look: We've Come Through tomorrow evening. We wish to thank those critics and audiences who felt that this production has value. We believed and still believe in what we are presenting at the Hudson Theatre. It is possible that we are right. P.S. We have nothing but admiration and love for our young cast."

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... All a critic requires to assess the work of some playwrights is a sense of smell, notes Winchell, Mirror... " I Still Remember" article in the current "Playbill" by agent Audrey Wood should be expanded into a book, suggests McHarry, News.

MCCLINTIC OBITS... Guthrie McClintic was as masterful in his sphere of the theatre as his wife Katharine Cornell was in hers, states Herald Tribune editorial. Certainly he will be sorely missed, both by those who knew his genius at first hand and by those who only admired and applauded it across the footlights. ...He was one of the most important forces for good in the modern theatre, commented Watts, Post.

PRO TYNAN... Since Kenneth Tynan's return to the London Observer after two years in NY, he has been writing some of the most stimulating criticism in London, approves Atkinson, Times. Although no one expects to agree with any drama critic on every occasion, Tynan consistently takes the theatre on a high level and writes about it with intelligence and vivacity.

SECOND GUESSES... A Cook For Mr. General follow-up Sun articles recorded as 2 pro, 1 con. Chapman, News, raved about perfectly chosen cast directed at unfaltering pace. Watts, Post, enjoyed fresh vein of wild humor on a tired subject. While Kerr, Herald Tribune, agreed it had a fresh sense on Army comedy, but felt script had a hole in the middle of it through which the good things drain away in a sentimentality that seems manufactured.

DRAMA MAIL BOX... Times reader agreed with Taubman, Times, estimate of Do You Know the Milky Way?, but but another disagreed with his The Caretaker notice.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES.. Sy Mottell, "director-observer " with The Garden of Sweets (Ford Foundation- New Dramatists Committee) has just spent the most frustrating five weeks of his life, he told Bensen , World Telegram & Sun. Under terms of the fellowship he was specifically forbidden from commenting on the play, criticizing or praising it, or discussing it " on any level" with anyone connected with it. Mottell has directed Off Broadway and has taught drama at Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, NY

EVERYBODY'S A CRITIC... NY Transit Authority has ordered the Subways Are For Sleeping teaser posters for the David Merrick production torn down. Signs with only the title are considered too suggestive by the Transit Authority. Producer is open to compromise, he told Balch, World Telegram & Sun. They can leave the posters up and put "Censored" stickers across them.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

Write Me A Murder is a neat, professional psychological "non-mystery" play with all the proper elements to intrigue the cult. But theatre fans looking for more play in their plays, fully developed characters, logical clues and a halfway believable conclusion will be just plain bored. The excellent cast is wasted in thankless roles that too often have them behaving like members of an improvised detective class at the Actors Studio. The innovation of between scene phone calls to cover prop changes is an idea that should have died with radio.

* *

Clandestine on the Morning Line is a charming , humorous modern folk tale delightfully acted by an outstanding Negro cast. Brilliant, warm portrayals by the entire cast move neatly along with the slight plot. The result is a delicious introduction to a stageful of nice, friendly individuals who clear up the minor business to be done between Act I and Act III. They are really so joyous to be with that at least one second-nighter can hardly wait for the sequel.

* *

O Marry Me! is a collector's item of confusion, a near masterpiece on how not to write a musical adaptation of a favorite classic. Every bit of humor, cleverness, style has been carefully extracted from "She Stoops to Conquer". In their place have been put easily identifiable, but poorly written, imitations of Wilde, Shaw and Shakespeare, plus a liberal dose of watered down Gilbert & Sullivan, My Fair Lady and Kiss Me Kate. The bewildered cast counter-attacked by displaying a wild collection of acting styles, all also done very badly. If the statute of limitations had not run out several hundred years ago, Oliver Goldsmith could sue and win.

* *

Look: We've Come Through was a beautifully written, superbly acted, tastefully directed portrait of a minor section of contemporary city life. If it did not tackle the major problems of today's headlines, it did clarify a few important problems of young people that are too often confused in modern plays. The author of last season's highly praised short-run Big Fish, Little Fish wrote another sometimes humorous, often very moving tale of city life and problems. He cannot be blamed if he returns to his more profitable mystery writing career. But for the sake of the theatre, let's hope he is already hopelessly stagestruck.

* *

Hail to the Brandt brothers who promise, and will almost certainly deliver, a brand new East Side playhouse in 1963. This will almost, but not quite, make up for their stubbornness in not returning their 42nd St film " grind " houses to their original purpose, legit.

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The debating team arguing the thesis " Seven critics kill new productions" will please explain the swift closing of Look: We've Come Through. It played a preview week to 75% of capacity with cut-rate tickets clipped from newspaper ads. It opened to four con notices from the morning paper reviews, and three pro notices from the afternoon paper reviews. This included a rave from Watts, Post. The answer should be kept down to 10,000 words, and the winner will get the Hudson Theatre.

OUTER

BROADWAY

THEATRE

LETTER

College Theatre

Univ of Chicago, Actors Company (new name of Masquers) presented The Bedbug by Vladmir Mayakovsky Nov 3-5. Soviet satire has been playing for five years in Moscow following a 25 year Stalin ban... The Mushroom Makers, an original musical by Susan Ablon on atomic age problems, presented Nov 1-4 by Columbia College and Barnard College seniors at Minor Latham Theatre, Barnard, NYC.

Boston Univ opened season with Cock-a-Doodle Dandy Nov 1- 5 ...Univ of Minn opened season with Captain Brassbound's Conversion Nov 2-12. Arena and Studio season opens with They Saw the Whole Zoo by Robert Andrew Bonnard, State Univ of Iowa Nov 15-19...State Univ of Iowa, Iowa City, starts 41st season with Hotel Paradiso. Studio Theatre to present two new scripts this year.

Julie Haydon was guest star in Twelfth Night at Millikin Univ, Decatur, Ill Nov 2-4...Earle Hyman was guest star in J. B. at College of Wooster, Ohio, Oct 18-21.

Ford Fund

30 grants-in-aid of $5000 each to be awarded by Ford Foundation to enable adminstrative interns to work with professional theatre companies, symphony orchestras and opera companies. Nominations must be submitted by managers, direct applications not accepted.

Gideon director-observer fellowship of Ford Foundation- New Dramatists Committee completed by Dr Harold Hansen, Brigham Young Univ, Provo, Utah. Jack Morrison, UCLA, just starting same with Take Her, She's Mine.

AETA

Rocky Mountain Theatre Conference Nov 2-4 at Utah State Univ, Logan, featured debut of Voice in the Wilderness by Clayton Cheney and readings by Thomas Mitchell... New England Theatre Conference presented special citations to Elliot Norton, Boston-Record American, Dr. Edwin Burr Pettit, Brandeis Univ, Grove Press, and Boston Arts Festival.

Winter Repertory

Sweet Bird of Youth revised version (with a less violent ending) to be presented at Civic Playhouse, Los Angeles Nov 14 by Edward Ludlom with Jeremy Slate and Helena Nash... Company of Four, Chicago, presenting Little Foxes week-ends ...Pinehurst, N. C. Playhouse to open second season in Feb, Donald Filippelli producer.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle opening production of Arena Stage, Washington. D. C. $850,000 playhouse drew rave notices from NYC critics Taubman, Times, and Nadel, World Telegram & Sun. Alan Schneider directed cast headed by David Hurst, Melinda Dillon. Times reviewer cheered illuminating and enchanting performance by excellent permanent company, which cannot be matched in NYC. WTS reviewer applauded production, the new translation by John Holmstolm, cast and the new playhouse which treats the audience (750) to comfort, good hearing and sight lines and manages to make almost every other theatre seem obsolete.

Community Theatre

Footlight Players, Charleston, S. C. opened "Little Theatre School" with classes for children and adults ...Arcadia, Calif, Community Theatre presenting $100 "Showcase Award" and four night presentation to best full-length script submitted...Little Theatre of Norfolk, Va. Experimental Wing presenting $50, $25 $15 prizes and April productions for best new one-act plays submitted.

Shakespeare

Ethical Shakespeare Theatre, Los Angeles, opens with Cymbeline Nov 11, David Bond director.

Summer Playhouses

The Dry Dolphin by William Berbung picked in local poll at best of ten original plays presented last season by Pioneer Playhouse, Danville, Ky.

Paris

Marriage Go Round opened to favorable notices at Gymnase Theatre...The Other Door by NYC author Maxwell Maltz to be presented in Feb, prior to NY try.

London

The Long Sunset by R. C. Sherriff, about the start of the British dark ages in the 5th century, opens Nov 7 at Mermaid...Critic's Choice with Ian Carmichael opens Dec 6 at Vaudeville ...A new theatre organization has been formed by Lord Esher to aid theatres in peril by seeking buyers and builders and to encourage builders to investigate the areas with no theatres.

US Repertory

American Repertory Company-Theatre Wing touring company headed by Helen Hayes to be given White House reception on return from Latin America.

Israel

Amnon Kabatchnik invited to direct Genesis by Aaron Meged, the first production at the new Habimah Theatre, Tel Aviv, this spring.

Africa

Beyond the Fringe with a London cast opened at Hofmeyr Theatre, Capetown.

Soviet

Faust and Death by Aleskandr Levanda, about the death of the first Soviet scientist in space, is current Moscow hit.

Current Road Tours

Daughter of Silence-Erlanger Philadelphia-10/30

First Love-Shubert, New Haven 11/8

Gay Life- O Keefe, Toronto 10/23

Man for All Seasons-Walnut Philadelphia 11/6

Night of the Iguana-Shubert Detroit 11/7

Subways Are for Sleeping-Shubert, Philadelphia 11/6

Sunday in New York-National Washington 11/6

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week." CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.